

# CALIFORNIA WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL

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- Drinking
- Swimming
- Eating Fish & Shellfish
- Aquatic Ecosystem Health
- Stressors & Processes

My Water Quality – hosted by the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program

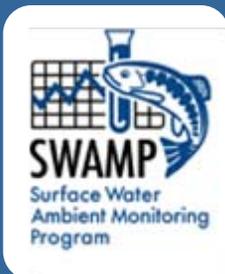
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## Welcome to My Water Quality

This web portal, supported by a wide variety of public and private organizations, presents California water quality monitoring data and assessment information from a variety of perspectives that may be viewed across space and time.



### IS OUR WATER SAFE TO DRINK?

Safe drinking water depends on a variety of chemical and biological factors regulated by a number of local, state, and federal agencies. [More >>](#)



### IS IT SAFE TO SWIM IN OUR WATERS?

Swimming safety of our waters is linked to the levels of pathogens that have the potential to cause disease. [More >>](#) (links to page 2)



### IS IT SAFE TO EAT FISH AND SHELLFISH FROM OUR WATERS?

Aquatic organisms may accumulate certain pollutants from the water in which they live, sometimes reaching levels that could harm consumers. [More >>](#)



### ARE OUR AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS HEALTHY?

The health of fish and other aquatic organisms and communities depends on the chemical, physical, and biological quality of the waters in which they live. [More >>](#)



### WHAT STRESSORS AND PROCESSES AFFECT OUR WATER QUALITY?

Beneficial uses of our waters are affected by emerging contaminants, invasive species, trash, global warming, acidification, pollutant loads, and flow. [More >>](#)

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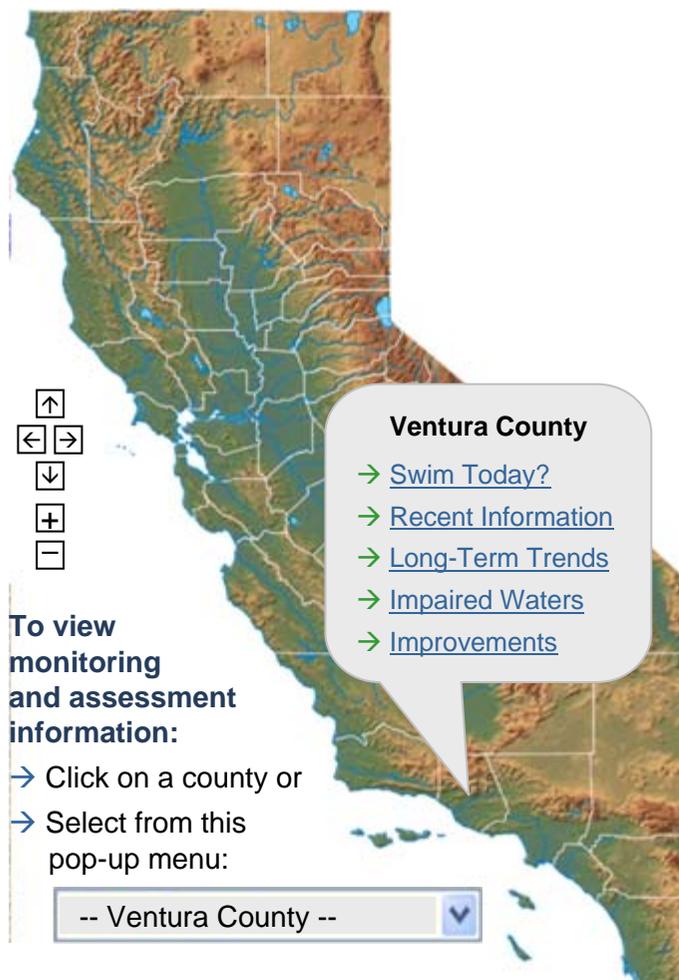


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Home → Swimming



## Is It Safe to Swim In Our Waters?



To view monitoring and assessment information:

- Click on a county or
- Select from this pop-up menu:

-- Ventura County --

Beach water quality monitoring and strong pollution prevention measures are critical for protecting beach goers from waterborne diseases. Monitoring is performed by county health agencies, publicly owned sewage treatment plants, other dischargers, environmental groups and numerous citizen-monitoring groups.

### QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- [Can I swim at my beach, lake, or stream today?](#) (links to page 3)
- [How clean was my beach, lake, or stream during the past week or month?](#) (links to page 5)
- [What are the long-term trends at my beach, lake, or stream ?](#) (links to page 6)
- [Which beaches, lakes, and streams are currently closed by county health agencies?](#) (links to page 4)
- [Which beaches, lakes, and streams are listed as impaired by the State?](#) (links to page 8)
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Home → Swimming → My Water Body Today



## Can I Swim at My Beach, Lake, or Stream Today?

The vast majority of the time, California's waters are open and available for recreational uses visitors enjoy. Unfortunately, there are times when it is not advisable to go in the waters due to bacterial contamination.

→ [County Health Agency Ocean Beach Closures and Postings](#) (links to page 4)

County health agency websites and contact information provide the most immediate information on ocean beach postings and closures.

→ [Postings](#) – Warnings to avoid contact with the water; monitoring shows bacteria levels exceed standards.

→ [Closures](#) – Restrictions on uses of water. Imminent public health threats, such as sewage spills.

→ [Heal the Bay Ocean Beach Report Card](#)

A third party rating system that evaluates water quality of individual California beaches based on the previous 4 weeks of monitoring results. Data are submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board from county health agencies. These report cards are updated weekly. Report card grades are based on the [State's water quality standards](#) (links to page 12) [for recreational waters](#). Click on a county and then on a specific beach to view information about that beach. Not a state-affiliated website.



→ Assessments for Freshwater Lakes and Streams

Currently, few agencies and organization provide such assessments electronically. Contact your local park, concessionaire, or [county health agency](#) for more information.

(links to page 4)

→ [National Beach Closures and Postings](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Program maintains beach water quality information for coastal and Great Lakes beaches. This information is not currently supplied in real time.



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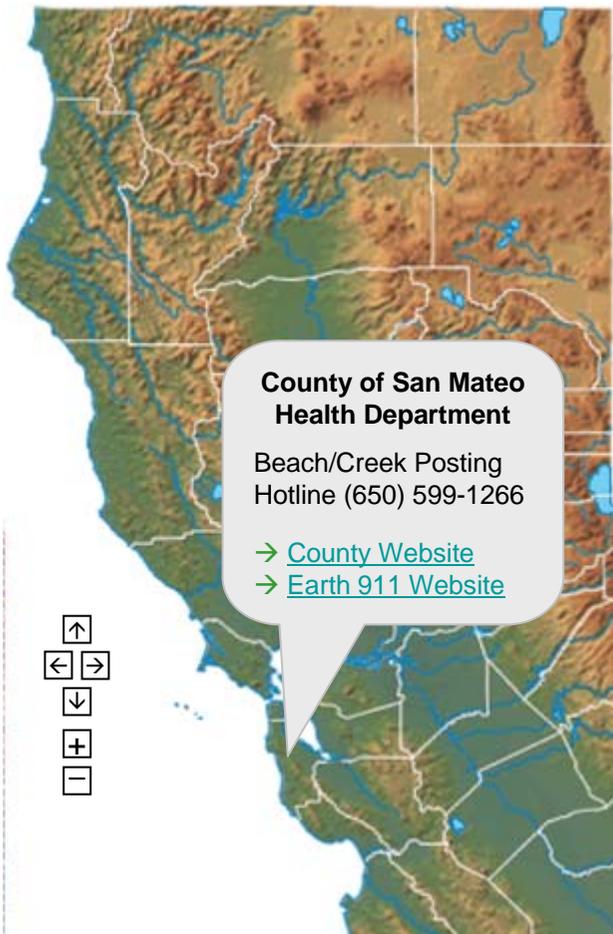
## Which Beaches, Lakes, and Streams are Currently Closed or Posted by County Health Agencies?



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### Ocean Beaches

This interactive map provides access to the most current information on postings and closures.

- [Postings](#) – Warnings to avoid contact with the water. Monitoring shows bacteria levels exceed standards.
- [Closures](#) – Restrictions on uses of water. Imminent public health threats, such as sewage spills.

This information is updated daily to weekly, depending on the county.

### View Posting and Closure Information

- Click on a county or
- Select from this pop-up menu:

-- San Mateo County --

### Freshwater Lakes and Streams

A few county health agencies provide creek and lake information along with ocean beach information. Otherwise, lake and stream information is currently unavailable electronically.

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Home → Swimming → Recent Conditions

## How Clean Was My Beach, Lake, or Stream During the Past Week or Month?



The vast majority of the time, California beaches are open and available for recreational uses visitors enjoy. Unfortunately, there are times when it is not advisable to go in the waters due to bacterial contamination.

### → [Heal the Bay Ocean Beach Report Card](#)

A third party rating system that evaluates water quality of individual California beaches based on the previous 4 weeks of monitoring results. Data are submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board from county health agencies. These report cards are updated weekly. Report card grades are based on the [State's water quality standards for recreational waters](#). Click on a county and then on a specific beach to view information about that beach. In the beach-specific window, click on the Historical Data tab to view the history of grades for that beach. Not a state-affiliated website.



[\(links to page 12\)](#)

### → [Ocean Beach Closures and Postings via State Water Board Beach Watch Website](#)

The Beach Watch system provides centralized information on beach postings and closures, supplied by county health agencies. This information is between 15 and 45 days old.



→ [Postings](#) – Warnings to avoid contact with the water. Monitoring shows bacteria levels exceed standards.

→ [Closures](#) – Restrictions on uses of water. Imminent public health threats, such as sewage spills.

### → Assessments for Freshwater Lakes and Streams

Currently, few agencies and organization provide such assessments electronically. Contact your local park, concessionaire, or [county health agency](#) for more information.

[\(links to page 4\)](#)

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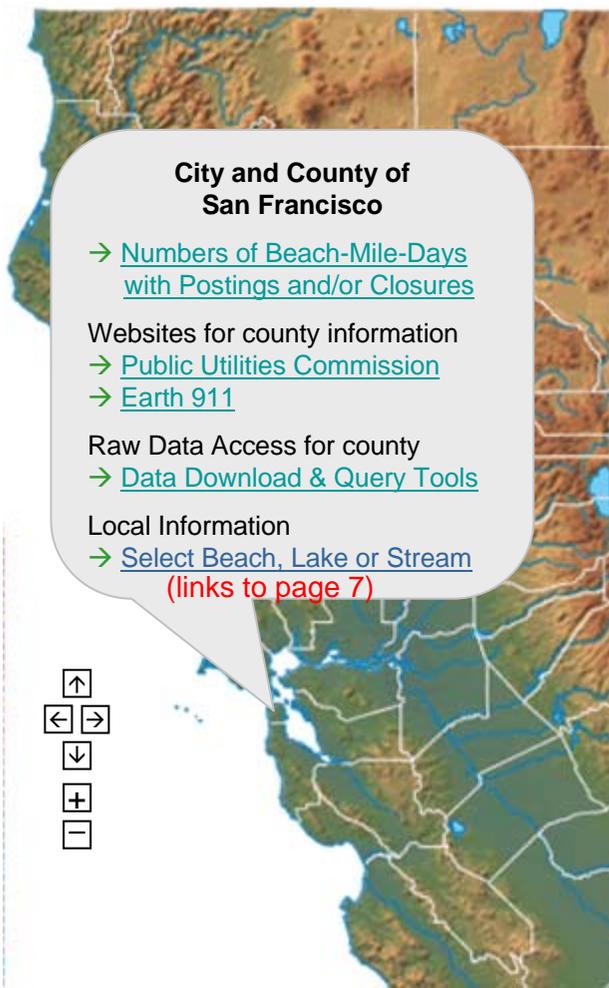
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## What Are the Long-Term Trends at My Beach, Lake, or Stream?

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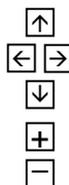
**City and County of San Francisco**

→ [Numbers of Beach-Mile-Days with Postings and/or Closures](#)

Websites for county information  
 → [Public Utilities Commission](#)  
 → [Earth 911](#)

Raw Data Access for county  
 → [Data Download & Query Tools](#)

Local Information  
 → [Select Beach, Lake or Stream](#) ([links to page 7](#))



Understanding trends allows decision makers to determine whether pollution sources are increasing in magnitude and/or frequency and the effectiveness of control measures. This interactive map provides access to trend information in closures, postings, and bacterial indicators for many of California's water bodies.

### View County-wide Trends in Monitoring and Assessment

- Click on a county or
- Select from this pop-up menu:

-- San Francisco County --

- You may then select an individual beach, lake or stream.
- To view statewide or national trend information, use the Browse by Geography links on the left.

### Freshwater Lakes and Streams

A few county health agencies provide creek and lake information along with ocean beach information. Otherwise, lake and stream information is currently unavailable electronically.

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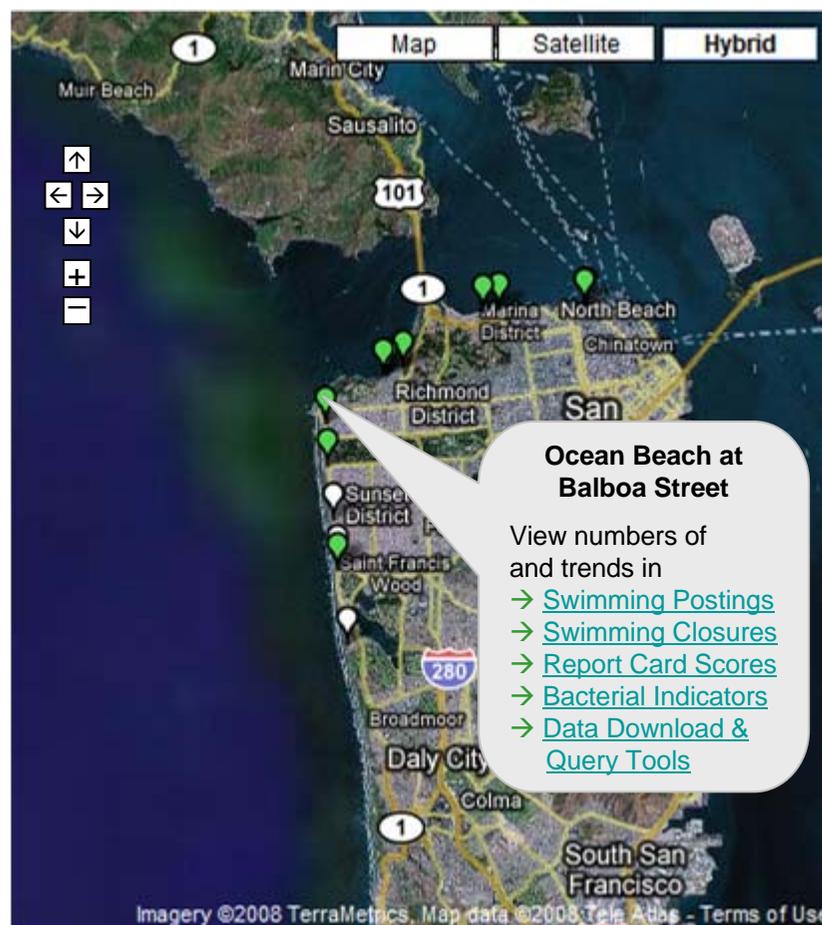
## What Are the Long-Term Trends in San Francisco?



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This interactive map provides access to trends in closures, postings, and bacterial indicators for San Francisco water bodies.

### View Trends in Swimming Safety Monitoring and Assessment Data

- Click on a site or
- Select from the pop-up menu below:

-- Ocean Beach at Balboa Street --

- To view county-wide, statewide, or national trend information, use the Browse by Geography links on the left.

### Freshwater Lakes and Streams

Lake and stream information is not currently available electronically for the City and County of San Francisco. Contact your local park or concessionaire for available information.

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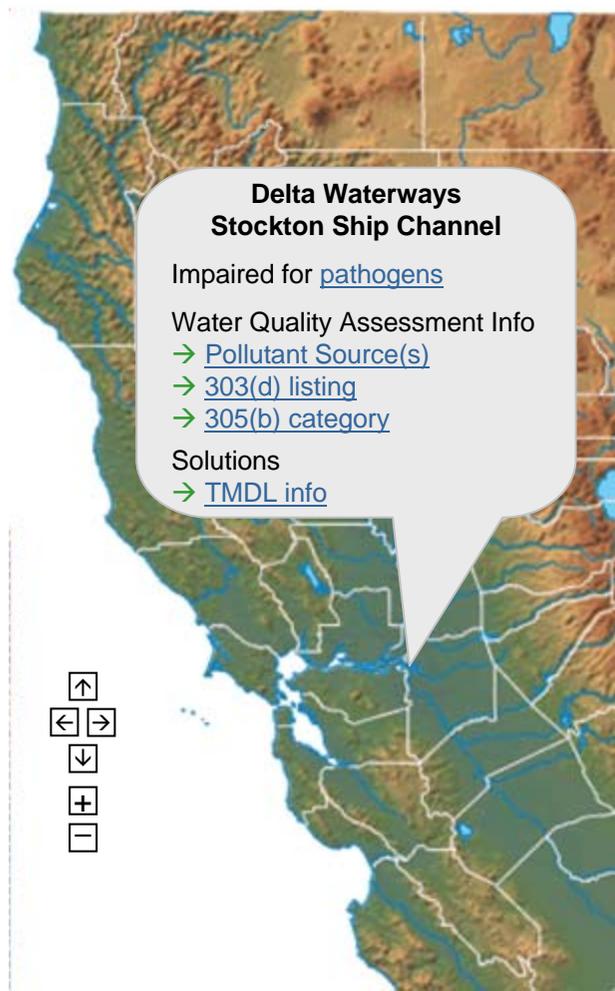
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Home → Swimming → Impaired

## Which Beaches, Lakes, and Streams Are Listed As Impaired?



This interactive map shows which of California's waters are impaired for contact recreation related factors and which factors, such as bacteria levels, are involved.

### View 303(d) Listing and Impairment Information

- Click on a water body or
- Select from this pop-up menu:

-- Delta Waterways, Stockton Ship Channel --

[\(links to page 12\)](#)

Under [Section 303\(d\) of the federal Clean Water Act](#), states, territories and authorized tribes are required to develop a list of water quality limited segments. Waters on the 303(d) list do not meet water quality standards, even after point sources of pollution have installed minimum required levels of pollution control technology. These are California's impaired waters. Remedies often take many years to complete.

[\(links to page 12\)](#)

Under [Section 305\(b\) of the federal Clean Water Act](#), water bodies are categorized based on the degree to which beneficial uses are protected and data availability.

→ [Statewide 303\(d\) List](#)

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## Are the Problems Getting Better?

A number of programs address existing water quality problems that affect swimming safety.

→ [Clean Beaches Initiative Grant Projects](#) (links to page 10)

California is committed to improving and protecting beaches along its coast. Since 2001, California has invested \$100 million in Clean Beach Initiative grants to fund local projects that reduce bacterial contamination along the coast. The State has also funded research to development more rapid detection methods for knowing when to post beaches, tracking the sources of contamination, and studies to better understand the relationship between bacterial indicators and incidence of disease.



→ [Total Maximum Daily Loads \(TMDLs\)](#)

A Total Maximum Daily Load, is a regulation designed to improve water quality by controlling the amount of a pollutant entering a water body. Under the federal Clean Water Act, every impaired water body on the [303\(d\) list](#) is required to have a TMDL, designed to bring the water body back into compliance with water quality standards.



→ [TMDLs that Address Pathogens, Bacterial Indicators, and Swimming Safety](#)

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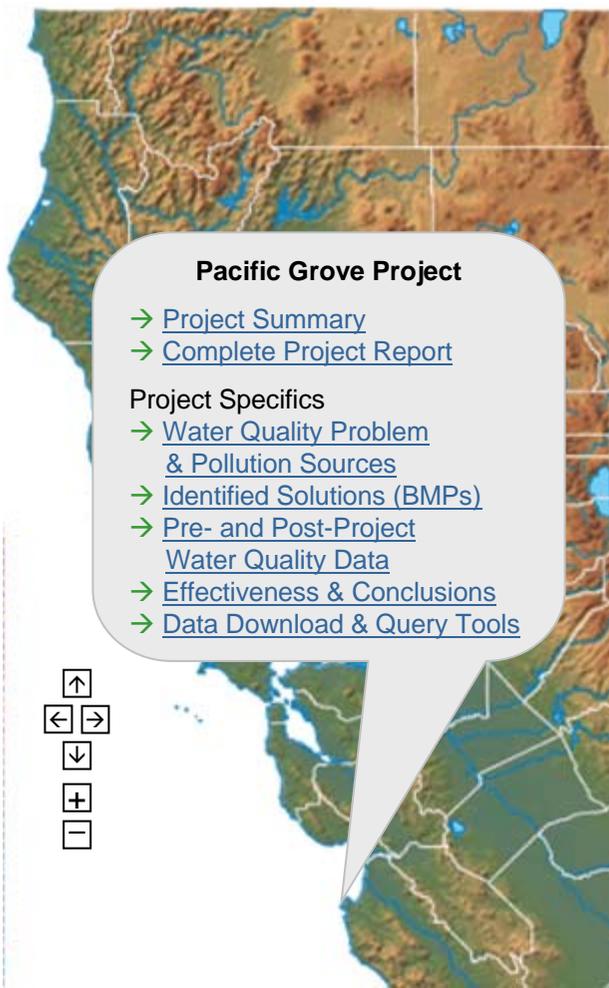


## Clean Beaches Initiative (CBI)

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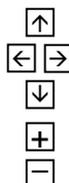
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#### Pacific Grove Project

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The Clean Beaches Initiative Grant Program address postings and closures at California public beaches caused by bacterial contamination. CBI grants help local agencies, non-profit organizations, and public agencies implement projects that protect and restore California's coastal water quality. This interactive map presents coastal water quality improvement projects funded by the CBI Grant Program.

### View Information on a Specific CBI Grant Project

- Click on a map location or
- Select the project name from this pop-up menu:

-- Select Project --

### Statewide Clean Beaches Initiative Information

- [Statewide Evaluation of Best Management Practices](#)
  - [Lessons Learned](#)
- [More on the Clean Beaches Initiative](#)



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## Pollution Sources & Health Risks for Swimming

Swimming safety depends largely on the levels of pathogenic organisms in the water. Higher levels of fecal indicator bacteria (FIB) in the water are associated with a greater risk of illness from water-contact recreational activities.

### Causes of Recreational Water Pollution

Most beach closings and advisories are the result of monitoring that detects elevated levels of bacteria, which indicate the presence of potentially harmful microorganisms from human or animal wastes. These wastes typically enter coastal waters from:

- Runoff from urban, suburban, and rural areas
- Sanitary sewer overflows, line breaks, and spills
- Sewage-treatment plants



Wastes can originate from other sources:

- Malfunctioning septic systems
- Waste from other swimmers, pets and other domestic animals, marine mammals and birds
- Boats
- Improperly disposed dirty diapers

When storms occur in coastal counties, advisories may be issued as a precautionary measure, because heavy rains may cause potentially harmful levels of pollution to beaches, making them unsuitable for swimming and surfing for at least 72 hours.

### Risks of Recreational Water Pollution

Disease-causing organisms, known as pathogens, may be present at or near the pollutant's point of entry. Gastroenteritis is the most common illness associated with swimming in water polluted by sewage. It occurs in a variety of forms that can have one or more of the following symptoms: nausea, vomiting, stomachache, diarrhea, headache and fever. Other minor illnesses that can result from swimming in polluted water include ear, eye, skin, nose, and throat infections. In highly polluted water, swimmers may occasionally be exposed to

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## Safe to Swim Laws, Regulations, and Standards

Introductory text

→ Recreational Water Use Standards and Guidance  
Designed to protect public health from pathogens that may present risks while engaging in water-contact recreational activities, such as swimming, diving, and surfing,

→ [California Ocean Water Contact Sport Standards and Guidance for Freshwater Beaches](#)

Health protective water recreation standards for ocean beaches are found in the Ocean Water Contact Sport Standards issued by the California Department of Public Health. Currently, there are no statewide water contact recreation standards for freshwater lakes and streams.

→ [Contact Recreational Use Standards for Freshwater Lakes and Streams](#)

The Water Quality Control Plans (Basin Plans) of the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards include standards to protect contact and non-contact water recreation. These standards vary from place to place.

→ [Statewide Freshwater Bacteria Standards](#)

The State Water Resources Control Board is developing statewide bacterial standards to protect contact recreational uses of freshwater lakes and streams.

→ [AB411 legislation and beach monitoring criteria](#)

→ [Clean Water Act Sections 303\(d\) and 305\(b\)](#)



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## About the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (SB 1070)

### Quick Links

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### Background

In November 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) and the California Resources Agency to establish the California Water Quality Monitoring Council (Monitoring Council). The MOU was mandated by Senate Bill 1070 (Kehoe, 2006) and requires the boards, departments and offices within the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) and the California Resources Agency to integrate and coordinate their water quality and related ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting.

SB 1070 (Water Code Sections 13167 and 13181) and the MOU require that the Monitoring Council develop specific recommendations to improve the coordination and cost-effectiveness of water quality and ecosystem monitoring and assessment, enhance the integration of monitoring data across departments and agencies, and increase public accessibility to monitoring data and assessment information. While the Monitoring Council may recommend new monitoring or management initiatives, it will build on existing effort to the greatest extent possible.

### Membership

The membership of the Monitoring Council is intended to represent a variety of water quality related interests. Monitoring Council members are selected by the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) and the Resources Agency.

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